

IMPROVEMENTS IN AND RELATING TO A BROADCAST NETWORK

5 Background of the invention

The present invention relates to the delivery of content over a broadcast network, particularly although not exclusively a broadband digital broadcast network.

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Broadband digital broadcast networks are known in which video and audio data are transmitted to a users equipped with suitable receivers. One such well known network is the terrestrial Digital Video Broadcasting (DVB-T) system found in Europe and elsewhere where the video and audio data comprises a plurality of channels allowing the user to select from a range of content. It has also been proposed to utilise such networks not only for the transmission of video and audio data but also for the delivery of more general data types including TCP/IP data traffic.

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The delivery of more general data types such IP data as may differ from the typical delivery of video and audio data in that rather than the network operator providing the same content to all users (broadcast), a specific user (unicast) or group of users (multicast) may require specific content. In order to deal with such a range or transmission scenarios, the addressing of content using conditional access has been proposed. Conditional access adds a unique, usually encrypted, identifier to content such that only a receiving terminal with the relevant decryption capability can receive the content. Further details of Conditional Access in relation to DVB can be found in the following ETSI Publications DVB-CI Common Interface Specification for Conditional Access and other Digital Video Broadcasting Decoder Applications EN50221 (V1:02/97) and Guidelines for Implementation and Use

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of the Common Interface for DVB Decoder Applications R 206 001 (V1: 1998) A025 (5/97).

- However, although conditional access allow the addressing of an individual terminal or, indeed a group of terminals, it nevertheless remains necessary to transmit content using all the transmitters in the network irrespective of whether the content is included in a broadcast, multicast, or unicast.

Summary of the Invention

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According to a first aspect of the invention, there is provided a method for locating a terminal for delivery of content in a broadcast network comprising: associating the terminal with a transmitter operable in another network; interrogating the another network to determine the location of the transmitter; and delivering the content to the terminal at the location of the transmitter.

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According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided a system for delivering content to a terminal in a broadcast network, the system comprising at least one terminal in a broadcast network, the terminal being associated with a transmitter in another network, wherein the broadcast network includes a processor operable to interrogate the another network to determine the location of the transmitter and thereby deliver content to the terminal at the determined location.

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According to a third aspect of the invention, there is provided an apparatus for delivering content to a terminal in a broadcast network comprising a processor operable to interrogate another network to determine the location of a transmitter associated with the terminal and deliver content to the terminal at the determined location.

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The another network may be a public land mobile network. In which case, the transmitter associated with the terminal may be a mobile station. Thus, the

terminal may be associated with a mobile station in the control of a single user. Consequently, the another network might make available, at the request of the user, location details relating to the mobile station to the broadcast network.

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According to another aspect of the invention, there is provided head end apparatus for use in a first multi-transmitter broadcast network, the apparatus comprising a terminal locator operable in response to a request to deliver content to a terminal in the first network to obtain terminal location information from a second, different network, a memory having stored therein transmitter location information and a controller operable in response to the request to transmit content to determine from the terminal and transmitter location information a suitable transmitter to deliver the content to the terminal.

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Advantageously, as a result of the more effective utilisation of the transmitter network there is an improvement in service quality and spectral efficiency of the network. Such an improvement arises in the first case because the network can select a transmitter which meets the particular reception requirements for the Terminal receiving that content. Thus, where it is known that in a particular area there exist terrain features, for example, which dictate against the use of one transmitter in favour of another this information could be used in selecting a transmitter to transmit to a terminal in that area. In the second case, the ability to select a particular transmitter means that the frequencies previously used by the other transmitters to deliver that content are freed for other purposes. The apparatus may further include a router to route content to the suitable transmitter. The router may be responsive to data stored with content to be transmitted identifying the suitable transmitter.

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According to another aspect of the invention, there is provided a terminal for use with a first multi-transmitter broadcast network, including a receiver operable to receive content transmitted by a selected one of a plurality of transmitters of the first network and a further transmitter connected to a

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second network from which the first network derives information relating to the location of the further transmitter to facilitate selection of the one transmitter.

Conveniently, the further transmitter is integrated in the terminal. In this way, the user can be certain that the content will be delivered to the correct location. Alternatively, the terminal may include an interface to permit connection to an external transmitter such as a mobile station of a cellular network. In either case, the further transmitter may also be used to provide a back or return channel which could be used to acknowledge delivery of content to the terminal and might also be used to make requests for content. Where no such acknowledgement ability exists, the assumption is, of course, that the further transmitter is reasonably certain to be co-located with the terminal. Furthermore, a profile might be established for each terminal user which could be consulted by a service provider desirous of delivering content to terminals of users likely to be interested in the content

According to still further aspect of the invention, there is provided a system for delivering content to a mobile terminal comprising a first broadcast network having a plurality of transmitters, and at least one terminal, the terminal having a receiver for receiving content from the first network, and in proximity thereto a further transmitter connected to a second network from which the first network derives information relating to the location of the further transmitter, wherein the selection of a transmitter to deliver content to the terminal is made in accordance with the location information.

Whilst according to another aspect of the invention there is provided a method of delivering content using a suitable transmitter of a first broadcast network to a first terminal in proximity to a second terminal of a second network comprising deriving location information relating to the second terminal from the second network and utilising that information in the selection of a suitable transmitter.

The selection of a suitable transmitter is preferably made based on the coverage pattern or footprint of the transmitter. Advantageously, where the position of the second terminal is insufficiently well defined to enable the selection of a particular transmitter from a plurality of potential suitable transmitters, delivery of the content is attempted via each of the potential transmitters in turn.

Brief Description of the Drawings

10 In order to aid in understanding the present invention, a particular embodiment thereof will now be described by way of example and with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a diagrammatic view of a digital broadcast network according to an embodiment of the present invention;
 Figure 2 is a more detailed diagrammatic view of the network of Figure 1;
 Figure 3 is schematic view illustrative of part of the method according to the invention; and
 Figure 4 is a diagrammatic plan view of a transmitter coverage pattern generated by the network of Figure 1.

Detailed description of the invention

Referring to Figure 1, this shows a terrestrial digital video broadcast (DVB-T) network 1 having a plurality of transmitters 11a, 11b, 11c. A user equipped with a suitable Digital Receiver (DR) hereinafter referred to as a terminal 3 incorporating a receiver 5, display 7 and user interface 9, can receive data broadcast by the network 1 from a transmitter 11 forming part of the network 1. The data broadcast by the transmitter 11 is derived from a variety of sources 13,15 via gateways 17,19 and may respectively include TCP/IP, datagrams (UDP/IP) and Television content. Furthermore, as is becoming increasingly common, the user is also in possession of a mobile station (MS)

forming part of a Public Land Mobile Network (PLMN). The MS is interfaced with the terminal 3 over an infrared link 14.

Before transmission, the data received from a source 13,15 is processed in head-end equipment. As is well known in the art, the head end equipment places the data into MPEG-based data containers. To cater for the delivery of data to a particular terminal or group of terminals, the containers may also hold address information which can be identified and read by a conditional access component in the terminal do determine whether the data is intended for that terminal. The network 1 also provides the facility for suitably equipped terminals 3 to interact with the network 1. Thus, a user may request the delivery of a computer file via the network 1 to her terminal 3. Such functionality requires a return channel 23 from the terminal 3 to the DVB-T network 1 and a conditional access component in the terminal 3. The return channel 23 can be provided in the form of a dial-up connection using a modem function of the MS 12. The MS 12 which is connected to the terminal 3, establishes a connection over a telecommunications network 27 such as a PLMN and/or PSTN 27 to a subscriber management system (SMS) 29 (shown externally of network 1 for clarity only) of the DVB-T network 1. The subscriber management system 29 has connections to both the gateways 17,19 and the transmitter head-end equipment. It is thus possible for the user to issue a request for specific content via the user interface 9 of the terminal 3. The request is received by the SMS 29 which obtains the content from the relevant gateway 17,19 and passes it to the transmitter head-end for placing into data containers for onward transmission. It should be noted that the request from the user might include a request for content which is not presently being transmitted by the network 1. To ensure that the user only receives the requested content, the data is broadcast with an identifier which the conditional access component in the terminal 3 recognises as being intended for delivery to the user. In the event that the content is received by another terminal, the conditional access component of that terminal will prevent delivery of the content.

originated in the terminal 3 and their followed successful reception of the content C, a corresponding report will be made. In the event that the SMS 29 receives a report of unsuccessful delivery then the SMS 29 will first attempt to re-send the content C. Thus, the SMS 29 will first update the MS 12 location from the HLR 31. Should this update reveal that the MS 12 remains in the same cell, it may be that the MS 12 is within a region of the cell covered by a different transmitter footprint FP. Thus, whilst the update continues to indicate the same location cell, the SMS 29 will instruct the mapper 35 to provide details of each transmitter covering at least part of that cell so that content C may be sent by that transmitter. Otherwise, if the terminal has moved to a cell covered by a different transmitter footprint FP, that transmitter 11 will be used to deliver the content. However, in the event that the above described re-sends fail after a pre-determined number attempts, the content will be transmitted over all the transmitters in the network.

In another embodiment of the invention, particularly suitable to a situation where the overlap of the transmitter footprints FP do not correspond closely to the underlying cell structure of the PLMN 27, a different method of obtaining the location of the MS 12 is employed. In this case, instead of the SMS 29 obtaining the latest cell information from the HLR 31, the SMS 29 requests the PLMN 27 to carry out a location update using a more precise positioning method such as base station triangulation or GPS. Particularly in the case where a MS 12 is located in a cell LC which is covered by separate transmitter footprints FP, the more accurate positioning information obtained in this way should allow the transmitter mapper 35 to direct the content C to the transmitter most likely to deliver the content to the terminal 3.

It will be further appreciated that the terminal 3 may incorporate a mobile station 12 rather than rely on the presence of an MS 12 in close proximity to the terminal 3 to provide the location information. By having the MS 12 incorporated in the same housing as the terminal 3 the user would both have less items of equipment to carry and also could be assured that the terminal 3

was always co-located with the mobile station 12 or, indeed another communications device which provides the positioning information for use by the network. In addition, the integrated MS 12 could be employed to provide a return channel 23 in the same manner that an independently carried MS 12

5 could be interfaced to the terminal 3 to facilitate the option of a return channel 23.

Furthermore, it will be clear that although in the above embodiment the Return Channel 23 is provided over the same network, namely the PLMN 27, as is

10 used to derive the location information, a separate return channel using a different bearer could be employed. Indeed, as has already been stated, the request for content need not originate with the terminal 3. For example, an advertiser or service provider may wish to push particular content to a certain user or group of users perhaps located in a certain area relevant to the

15 content being pushed.